FOREWORD

As Keats wrote to Haydon, "I have ever been too sensible of the labyrinthian path to eminence in Art. . . to think I understood the emphasis of Painting." Let us leave it to the critics to pursue the exciting adventure which waits them in these rooms; to trace the progress of the artist's brush beginning, shall we say, with the chocolate-faced nursemaid and the monolithic figures of 1920; to note the birth of other sensibilities; how blues and oranges trembled into life; how this mass mated itself with that; how the line grew taut or slack; how with an infinitude of varied touches the finished picture came into being. For us the experience has its excitement too. A meaning is given to familiar things that makes them strange. Not a word sounds and yet the room is full of conversations. What are the people saying who are not sitting on that sofa? What tune is the child playing on her silent violin? Nobody moves and yet the room is full of intimate relationships. People's minds have split out of their bodies and become part of their surroundings. Where does the man end and Buddha begin? Character is colour, and colour is china, and china is music. Greens, blues, reds and purples are here seen making love and war and joining in unexpected combinations of exquisite married bliss. A plant bends its leaves in the jar and we feel that we too have visited the depths of the sea.

Cornfields bask in the sun of man's first summer; the haymakers are primeval men. Everywhere life has been rid of its accidents, shown in its essence. The weight of custom has been lifted from the earth. Hampstead is virginal; Ken Wood ecstatic. The onions and the eggs perform together a solemn music. Flowers toss their heads like proud horses in an Eastern festival. In short, precipitated by the swift strokes of the painter's brush, we have been blown over the boundary to the world where words talk such nonsense that it is best to silence them. And yet it is a world of glowing serenity and sober truth. Compare it, for example, with Piccadilly Circus or St. James's Square.

VIRGINIA WOOLF.

Monday 27 Aug 1934

I would have loved to come over to Wolton my passion for seeing other people's homes is unquenchable — Manor, but was too shy to suggest it; for three reasons (I have just analysed them)

1) You would have loved her to admire my book. She wouldn't. That wd. have made me shy.
2) You would have said I was good looking. She would have suffered a shock at my plainness — shy again.

Yes, these authentic women — like Shiel — make it almost impossible for many men, shy women, like Virginia Woolf, ever to meet their, Shiels', friends.

You were very nice, very remarkable, to the young the other day: but Lord! don't count them among my 'class'; rather among my clientele — both being almost bankrupt, struggling like this in London; rather desperate; but not among the better class. If you do an essay that pleases, I shall fire off a wolver at you

head about Barney Balfour & Pentonleys - Ah a
student of human nature, but it add what a
nice you can always get out of anyone, by
telling them they live in a hotel Clan - Would
dead. Still my heart would heal, would heal
& blossom in red, at the head, & that over my
board. feet.

Maynard. He certainly knew of that NYPL
remark about Ethel being a national monument
& she's only got to tell the tax collector no: but
I must show one of his magnificent flights -
He has an exaggerated optimism, where he admires,
which is one of his endearing qualities. Buy of
Come I'll ask his advice, if you would
like it He knew, of course, all about
Selincourt (no, that not the word) he
drove to Byculla to buy women today - women
for the marmoset - left in the greenhouse. They had
died. Oh those doors! How you hunt me! Are
they the Wilmington doors? Well. There was a
horrid other villa, without a garden we loved
have had them; & I've always regretted it. but
Commonsense tells me, this better to be here. Only
how fierce & perennial the love of country is!
I remember walking by the Long Man — if
that what you mean V:

Rita 2.4.63

P.S. Wednesday 2nd Aug 1934

—

But, joking apart. I am quite sure that of the worst should happen, & the Treasury demands payment, a letter to the papers, signed Maurice Baring, or Lord Balfour or both — with Beecham thrown in — would solve the question in 2 weeks. And also I'm sure that this is the fitting way to solve it. In fact that's obvious to the meanest capacity. So please I beg of you devote yourself to memoir writing for posterity & don't trump up dust & ashes to Pelican dawn. This I consider your most sacred duty. Ask Lady Balfour if she doesn't agree.

Monks Horton, 11th Sept. 1934

That was very nice of you — to send
me the Limpkins, it still
smells sweet.
But we've had an awful blow —
Rosemary's death — You'll have
seen — Mrs Fernihough for Nana.
We took her up to London yesterday
& shall probably go up on Monday
again for the service — music only
I think. He was to me the most
heavenly person — So I know
you'll understand my dumb mood.
— to rich so infinitely gifted —
& oh how we've talked & talked —
for 20 years now.

V.

Monk's House,
Rodmell, near
Lewes, Sussex.

Monday. 24 Sept 1934

Yes. I know I ought to have written before;
but also, you dont want me to write
when I'm in a silent mood; & I've been in
a silent mood.
All the same, I ought to have written, if only
to explain that you mistook, no doubt
through my own obscurity, the suggestion
about the Income Tax. What I meant was,
should I have to pay it, a letter
came from Maurice Baring, to the papers,
saying "Ethel Smyth has to pay ——: well
we want to pay it for her." would
bring subscriptions needed in 10 days. That's
was what I meant to say. And I'm sure
it's true. So dont let a little affair of a
few hundreds stand between you &
the immortal page: dont know how to.
Here's your letter. Come, & I'm
mortality.

Rota 2. 4. 63

Glad to see that you've been delving in immortality – Lady Ponsonby to wit.
There a violent wind, & all my letters have been dispersed; so I can't refer to the document.
I think we shall stay here, save for a day in London, till the 1st week in October, & the 2nd week. And I'm going over to see Vita one day; & my niece & Quentin here all alone, & my nephew too: & last week we had 2 more nieces, & such an odd lot as Rasa muffins.
And I have been thinking about the deaths of my friends. I have been thinking at a great rate – that is with extreme visibility. Do you find that is one of the effects of a shock – that pictures come up, up, up, without bidding or much control? I loved almost to Roger yesterday in the room at Charleston. Nessa sits surrounded by her Children doing needlework – dear, dear! So I break off. And Maynard is building a theatre, he's so rich, & so enterprising. And I have a vast load of MSS. to read: & so on driving at that interminable book, which has the vitality of a snake. I can't end it. V.

NYPL

52,
Tavistock Square,
W.C.1.
Telephone : Museum 2621.

Fitzy. 12 Oct. 1934

As this will show, we are back again — once Sunday, indeed. And you in at Longuay, rousing sparks in the orchestra, to ~~said~~ read; fanning them to flames; inflaming even the old man with the drum, (d'ya remember him) with amorosity. I hope the ijits consoled with the Major, the last one. about his wife's death. I've been to Bromley; walked home across the park. I'm too lucky to tell you why) went to Bromley. But I like the London suburbs in autumn — their numerous poetry. And the Hyde Park facades. I love overhearing scraps of the flowers burning in a few pale

talk by the Serpentine in the dark, a thinking grey
own youth, wondering how far we have in
other people, then buying half a pound of tea,
&c on, &c on. (Je ne sais rien ruby a I am.).
I think Gwen is almost an — what the word!
I mean not quite right in the head. I think the
pictures & the skull haven't joined up: —
Vita's hot wind pulls too incessantly — We
touched with them: the silver sets at last: Gwen: likes
Have you read the book (Hers) back — If so,
Let me have your opinion. I want your
You mine. Jo muttered with Victor: Colette
persistently picking like a parrot with corns
on her toes. No, no, no, I say: strong
under the picking fronti. Oh dear, NYPL
is this work putting me in train to working!
And you won't be there. You're caressing
with the magic Lad has I should like to
peep round the palms & look. You having
a jaw & bitter with the widower at this
moment — & not there, but here, but here!

V.

Rota 2.4.63

52 Tavistock Sqh. HEFFERS

Monday 220ct 1934

Then is the only letter I have written lately in st—
2 I sent at Heffers, Cambridge. But it
rather spoils for an author who loves a
fan do.
I'm so sorry I can't even fill this little square,
I've only 5½ minutes. As I can
1. yes. of Maurice asks me I'll yes. I but I can't
possibly write myself.
2- I asked Joyce, but the we are unfortunate
regist: I'll try again:
3. Colette says why can't I refuse 'refresh' he:
seems has had the works — that he has:
4. whatever 4 2 5 2 6? I forget.
Vile ha rather has reviews in London:
the grateful provinces adore the aristocracy.
I've no story lucky either way about
Gloves: no. I don't think I have any
jealousy: only rather a melancholy
that I should invent a mediocrity